

1813. d.

CHRISTMAS,

A POEM.

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ROMAINE JOSEPH THORN,

AUTHOR OF

CLITO AND DELIA; THE MAD GALLOP, OR TRIP
TO DEVIZES; RETIREMENT; BRISTOLIA;
LORD HOWE TRIUMPHANT; OR THE
GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE; &c. &c.



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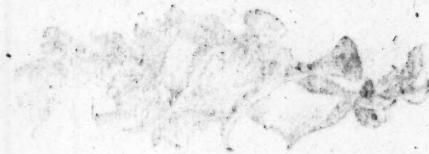
1795.

CHRISTMAS

1838.

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TO THE

P U B L I C.

IN this small Poem, descriptive of the innocent recreations which prevail throughout the country, during the *Christmas* recess, I am conscious, there are many *imperfections*; but one of the best of our British Poets (*Pope*) in his *Essay on Criticism*, very justly says,

“Whoever thinks a *faultless* piece to see,
“Thinks what ne’er was, nor is, nor e’er shall be.”

Therefore, I am emboldened, with all its defects, to issue it from the pres; at the same time,

hoping, that there are some passages to be found in it, which will, in a measure, atone for the faults it may contain.

The fastidious critic will, perhaps, on a cursory perusal, deem *three or four lines* in particular (which are printed in *italics*) not worthy a place in poetry: the *simplicity* of the incidents, necessarily introduced, will, I trust, prove a sufficient *apology* for their insertion.

Should this little piece meet with that degree of approbation the former humble effusions of my Muse have been favored with, I shall be happy; and it is with the greatest deference and respect, that I, once more, subscribe myself,

The Public's most obedient humble servant,

Romaine Joseph Thorn.

BRISTOL, April, 1795.

CHRISTMAS,

A POEM.

HAIL, CHRISTMAS, hail! of thee, I, gladly, now
Attempt to sing. Much might my Muse declare
Of what *importance* unto MAN thou waft,
When (as he lay beneath his Maker's *curse*,
Through Adam's trespass, and no *Saviour* born, 5
With *mercy* fraught, to rescue him from woe)
Thou, pregnant proving with *Salvation* rich,
Didst give a GOD, incarnate, to sustain
His load of guilt, and angry *Justice* soothe,
By suff'ring for him on the shameful cross. 10
But themes like this to grave *Divines* I leave;
And purpose, that my humble lay record
The harmless *mirth* which, in the *country*, reigns,
When, *Christmas*, thou, thy welcome visit mak'st.

B

CONVIVIAL SEASON! at thy near approach, 15
In country towns, Britannia's HOUSEWIVES, blithe,
Their *pewter, brass, and tin* utensils, scour :
Their *windows*, too, they, by ablution, rid
Of spot opaque ; and much their cleansing *brush*,
In ev'ry secret cranny of the house, 20
Annoys the *spider*, tyrant of the walls !
And deals destruction to his curious web.
Well pleas'd, their store of fam'ly *plate* they take
From *cupboard* lock'd, where, haply, it hath stood
A period long, by all the household train 25
Untouch'd, unseen ; but, now, is burnish'd up
(To dignify th' approaching festive hours,
And gaily entertain expected friends)
In brightness equal to the radiant shield
Which careful THETIS, anxious for the weal 30
Of great ACHILLES, to the hero gave.
From every hedge is pluck'd, by eager hands,
The HOLLY-BRANCH, with prickly leaves replete,
And fraught with berries, of a crimson hue ;
Which, torn asunder from its parent trunk, 35
Is straightway taken to the neighb'ring towns,
Where *windows, mantels, candlesticks, and shelves,*
Quarts, pints, decanters, pipkins, basons, jugs,

CHRISTMAS.

And other articles of household ware,
The verdant garb confess. Now, too, is heard 40
The hapless *cripple*, tuning, through the streets,
His *carol* new; and, oft, amid the gloom
Of midnight hours, prevail th' accustom'd sounds
Of wakeful *WAITS*, whose melody (compos'd
Of *hautboy*, *organ*, *violin*, and *flute*, 45
And various other instruments of mirth)
Is meant to celebrate the coming time;
And whose nocturnal serenade affords
Sensation, pleasing, to the list'ners round.
The city *Shopman*, now, the warehouse leaves, 50
Whose bus'ness long his strict attention claim'd;
And, smartly mounted, to the *country* rides,
With rapid pace; amongst his rural friends,
To share their pleasures, and relax his toil:
Where, he or dallies with the buxom nymphs, 55
Or, arm'd with thunder, braves th' inclement cold,
Through marshy fields, or over hills of snow,
Destruction dealing to the feather'd race.
With gladsome heart, against the Season gay,
The rustic Farmer taps his copious casks 60
Of *stingo* old, and num'rous *cyder* butts;
His barrels, too, of nappy *ale*, are broach'd;

Nor pleas'd is he, unless his neighbours round,
Ere *Christmas* come, anticipate his cheer,
And, fuddled, stagger to their sev'ral homes. 65
The SCHOOL-BOY, also, feels excess of joy,
And, anxious, ev'ry moment deems an age
Till *breaking-up* takes place ; to sing of which
(Though CRITICS should condemn the humble theme)
My Muse, delighted, will attempt the task. 70

A SCHOOL there was, within a well-known town
(*Bridgwater* call'd) in which the boys were wont,
At *breaking-up* for *Christmas'* lov'd recess,
To meet the Master, on the happy morn,
At early hour :* the custom, too, prevail'd, 75
That he who first the seminary reach'd
Should, instantly, perambulate the streets,
With sounding horn, to rouse his fellows up ;
And, as a compensation for his care,
His flourish'd copies, and his chapter task, 80
Before the rest, he, from the Master, had.
For many days, ere *breaking-up* commenc'd,
Much was the clamour, 'mongst the beardless crowd,
Who, *first*, would dare his well-warm'd bed forego ;

* Usually at four o'clock.

And, round the town, with horn of ox equipp'd, 85
His schoolmates call. Great emulation glow'd
In all their breasts; but, when the morning came,
Straightway was heard, resounding through the streets,
The pleasing blast (more welcome, far, to them,
Than is, to *sportsmen*, the delightful cry 90
Of *hounds* on chase) which soon together brought
A tribe of boys, who, thund'ring at the doors
Of those, their fellows, sunk in *Somnus'* arms, 95
Great hubbub made, and much the town alarm'd.
At length, the gladsome, congregated throng,
Toward the *school*, their willing progress bent,
With loud huzzas, and, crowded round the desk,
Where sat the Master, busy at their books,
In reg'lar order, each receiv'd his own. 100
The youngsters, then, enfranchis'd from the school,
Their fav'rite sports pursu'd. Some pleasure took
In rashly sliding on the frozen pond,
Whose crazy surface men, perhaps, had deem'd
With horror pregnant, and replete with fate;
Whilst others, vent'rous, with the dang'rous gun 105
Their time employ'd; nor was there one but felt
(His vacant weeks drawn nearly to a close)
Disquiet, grievous, at the frequent thought,

That, swiftly, the appointed day approach'd,
When (all his Christmas holidays expir'd) 110
To SCHOOL, he, forthwith, must return again.

Dire is the slaughter which prevails around,
To make provision for the coming hours
Of gen'ral joy! Ducks, now, and household fowls,
By countless thousands, eagerly are caught, 115
And robb'd of life; the well cramm'd turkey, too,
Who lately strutted 'mongst his feather'd friends,
With air majestic and gigantic bulk,
Amid the sudden, epidemic rage,
No mercy finds; nor you, ye geese renown'd! 120
(Although your ancestors immortal Rome,
By well tim'd cackling, from destruction sav'd,
When barb'rous Gauls, by furious Brennus led,
With daring step, the Capitol approach'd)
Can 'scape the carnage of the present time; 125
But, having first the deadly stroke receiv'd,
Your bones, with others, luckless as your own,
Must, shortly, help to load the festive board.

Thy welcome Eve, lov'd CHRISTMAS, now arriv'd,
The parish bells their tuneful peals resound; 130

And mirth, and gladness, ev'ry breast pervade.
The pond'rous ASHEN FAGGOT, from the yard,
The jolly *Farmer*, to his crowded *hall*
Conveys, with speed; where, on the rising flames
(Already fed with store of massy brands) 135
It blazes soon; — nine bandages it bears,
And, as they each disjoin (so Custom wills)
A mighty jug of sparkling *cyder's* brought,
With *brandy* mix'd, to elevate the guests;
Who, closely huddled round the cheerful fire, 140
In various ways, their *Christmas* gambols urge.
'Twas at an harmless village scene, like this,
The fair CLORINDA and her noble youth,
HORATIO nam'd, first met, admir'd, and lov'd;
Whose story (as it is not known to all) 145
My humble Muse will, willingly, repeat.

Not quite two centuries have roll'd their round,
Since, in a pleasant Western County, dwelt
An honest *Farmer*, whom, throughout the tale
(The title pleasing) we shall DAMON call. 150
Of Fortune's favor, much he could not boast;
But, in his fields, industriously, he toil'd
Throughout the day; and, at th' approach of eve,

With cheerful bosom, reach'd his happy home.
He, though not crown'd with riches, at command, 155
Had yet an easy competence proeur'd,
And, in his heart, posses'd an ample store
Of (what the giddy and the gay know not)
Content divine; whilst to indulgent Heav'n,
For *what he had*, his grateful thanks he sent, 160
The neighbours round, ador'd him, and admir'd;
Nor was there one but, with unfeigned zeal,
The choicest blessings wish'd upon his head,
And spake, profusely, in the good man's praise.
An only child the tender DAMON had, 165
CLORINDA call'd, than whom was never seen
A maid more fair: Her charming form, to view,
Was straight, as is the poplar tree renown'd;
In just proportion, too, her cheeks display'd
The lily's whiteness and the rose's blush: 170
Her auburn hair, in waving ringlets, grac'd
Her lovely neck, most exquisitely shap'd!
Whilst, through her 'kerchief, to the sight, arose
Her bosom, whiter far than Alpine snow;
And, in whose mansion, VIRTUE held her reign, 175
With INNOCENCE serene: Her piercing eyes
Such lustre own'd, as doth resplendent SOL,

When, from the smiling regions of the East,
He comes, and, bursting Æther's gelid clouds,
Bestows his radiance on the gladden'd world. 180
Thus shone the Maid! and, now, had just attain'd
Her eighteenth year; when, from a neighb'ring school
(At which the careful Damon had her plac'd,
Her Mother dying in her infant days)
Return'd, to pass her holidays away 185
Within the circle of her country friends,
She, with her Father, on a Christmas-Eve,
By chance, or fate, was standing at the door,
What time the servants (stagg'ring 'neath the load)
An *Ashen Faggot*, of enormous size, 190
Were busy, bearing to the sportive hall.
Just then HORATIO, passing near the house,
As homeward he, from shooting, bent his course,
CLORINDA saw: Ye Gods, what transports fierce,
Like swiftest light'nings, rush'd upon his soul, 195
And seiz'd his nerves! Speechless, awhile, he stood;
And, as a statue, void of motion, too:
For though, from *childhood*, he had pass'd his days
'Mid mighty London's celebrated throng,
Such pow'rful beauty nee'r, before, he view'd, 200
As now appear'd to bless his ravish'd eyes!

His *rank* and *fortune* (for of noble blood
HORATIO was, and affluent to excess)
Might him have warranted to ask the hand
Of any female, 'mongst the higher class; 205
But potent Love had now absorb'd his soul
In one alone, and fair CLORINDA she!
At length, recover'd of his torpid state,
With graceful manners, and bewitching mien,
He, boldly, ventur'd to address the Maid; 210
(For *lovers* seldom at a loss are found
To introduce discourse.) The Father saw;
And him invited, ign'rant of his rank,
Beneath his roof, to join the cheerful guests,
And share a portion of their Christmas sport. 215
With rapture, he the offer kind embrac'd,
And mingled in their mirth: but, ah! their *mirth*
Was nought to him! alone, the Virgin rul'd
His ev'ry thought, nor all the world beside
Appear'd an object worthy his regard. 220
His ardent passion fair CLORINDA view'd,
And soon HORATIO, from her pouting lips,
A declaration of her *love* receiv'd;
Though not *too hastily* did she disclose
The soft emotions which her bosom felt; 225

For, in an Angel's fascinating form,
The blooming Maid an Angel's *virtue* bore.
Unus'd was she to *affection* mean,
And jilting conduct, which the modish Fair,
Too often, practise on unwary swains. 232
Disinterestedly, she lov'd the Youth;
And, had he been of *origin obscure*,
(Possessing the accomplishments he did,
Of mind and body) still the peerless Maid
Would only him have favor'd with her heart. 235
Some months elaps'd, when this enamour'd pair
(Consent of *Damon* being first obtain'd)
At *Hymen's* altar, mutually, exchang'd
Their faithful vows; and, in each other, found
(What all the world, without, could never yield). 240
Excess of joy. Gladly, *HORATIO* kept
The happy day, on which he first beheld
CLORINDA's charms; to give a proof of which,
An humble *Ashen Faggot's* semblance strong,
'Till death, he, proudly, on his carriage bore. 245

Throughout the country, CHRISTMAS-DAY elaps'd,
The happy people, instantly resign
Their hours to mirth; unopen'd are the shops,

And bus'ness (for the jovial week, at least) 245
A stoppage feels. Clad in his Sunday clothes, 250
The *Workman*, straightway, to the *pot-house* hies
(Throng'd closely, and in clouds of smoke involv'd)
And there, amidst his congregated friends,
O'er *pipe* and *can*, vociferates, aloud,
His hum'rous song; or, POLITICS the theme, 255
Big as a *Lord*, his sentiments he speaks,
And reprobates the *MINISTER*, whose *pride*,
And *headstrong rashness*, great Britannia plunge
In *needless war*, and load her gallant sons
With *taxes heavy*; such, as not the page 260
Of English history the like can shew.
Gladly, the Boy, with *Christmas-box* in hand,
Throughout the town, his devious route pursues;
And, of his Master's customers, implores
The yearly mite: often his *cash* he shakes; 265
The which, perchance, of coppers few consists,
Whose dulcet jingle fills his little soul
With joy as boundless as the *debtor* feels,
When, from the *bailiff's* rude, uncivil gripe,
His friends redeem him, and, with *Pity* fraught, 270
The claims of all his *creditors* discharge.
Now *social Friends* their *social friends* invite,

To share the feast ; and on the table's plac'd
The fam'd *sirloin*, with *puddings* nicely bak'd,
Surcharg'd with plumbs, and, from the oven, hot; 275
Nor wanting are *minc'd-pies*, in plenteous heaps,
T' augment the dainties of the brave repast.

The day expir'd, and fable *ev'ning* come,
Forthwith, the company, in gamesome mood,
The *parlour* crowd. High on the cheerful fire 280
Is, blazing, seen th' enormous Christmas brand ;
Whilst closely fasten'd are the sev'ral doors,
T' exclude the wind, which only is observ'd
In sudden, hollow, boist'rous blasts, to roar
Throughout the street. *Young Men and Maidens*, now, 285
At "feed the dove" (with laurel leaf in mouth)
Or "blind-man's buff" or "hunt the slipper," play,
Replete with glee. Some, haply, cards adopt :
When, straightway, on the board of green, appear
Kings, *Queens*, and *Knaves* (*Equality admir'd!*) 290
With all the legion of inferior rank,
In mingled heaps: Silence profound prevails,
The whilst, attentively, at *whist* they stick,
Save that Miss scolds, if (on a frolic bent)

The hum'rous youth o'erlook her secret hand, 295
And (dex'trous at the *fun*) her trumps purloin.

Or, if to *forfeits* they the sport confine,
The happy folk, adjacent to the fire,
Their stations take; excepting one alone
(Sometimes the social Mistress of the house) 300
Who sits within the centre of the room,
To cry the *pawns*: much is the laughter, now,
Arising solely from the awkward lot
Of such as can't the *Christmas catch* repeat,
And who, perchance, are sentenc'd to salute 305
The jetty beauties of the *chimney-back*,
Or lady's shoe: others, more lucky far,
By hap, or favor, meet a sweeter doom,
And, on each fair-one's lovely lips, imprint
The ardent *kiss*; blushing, the maiden, coy, 310
With fruitless strength, endeavours to resist
The am'rous youth, and shun his warm embrace;
Whilst, fir'd with transport, he pursues the bliss,
Nor rests until the pleasing task's complete.

Thus, at a distance from the city's noise, 315
The rural people pass their *Christmas* hours.

But, come, my Muse, to *Bristol*, much rehoun'd,
Before a period to thy strain is put,
A moment turn: her *praise*, already, thou
Hast humbly sang;* nor, though the Bard obscure
(Of *disingenuous, mean, malignant soul*)
Lately, her *virtues* and her *fame* decry'd;†
Shalt thou exclude her from thy present lay.

Whilst, in the *country, mirth, alone*, prevails,
Around the *Bush*, to view the *larder* there,

* See a Poem of the Author's, entitled *Bristolia*.

+ I beg leave to refer my readers to a Quarto POEM, not long since issued from the press, entitled "Bristol, a Satire," than which never was a publication more destitute of CANDOUR. The Author (supposed to be a Mr. R. L.) notwithstanding (as I am informed) he is a native of the city, gives a loose to the bitterest invectives against his fellow citizens; and, amongst other things equally false, most unjustly accuses them of deficiency in point of *charity*! This is the more unpardonable, as it is notorious, that not a city in England abounds with more charities than BRISTOL, in proportion to its size. I might say much on the spirit of malignancy which pervades the whole of this Poem; as well as on the low and ungrammatical language it contains; but, at present, shall only give the following specimen of the Author's extraordinary abilities, which possibly may operate on the public as a criterion whereby they may judge of the merit of the work itself. When this immortal Bard announced his divine Poem in the Bristol papers, the advertisement read thus, "Just published (&c.) BRISTOL, A Satire, A Poem!!" The adjective *satirical* this superabundant genius, perhaps, never heard of; otherwise, I suppose, he would have called it a *Satirical Poem*.

What hundreds throng! Chok'd is the passage quite
With those, who, eager, for admittance press; 330
And who, with eyes uplifted, feel absorb'd
In vast amazement at the heaps of game,
Which line the walls. Within a neighbouring room, 330
Conspicuously, appears the *Baron* huge
Of *roasted Beef*, which truly gen'rous WEEKS,
For liberality of spirit fam'd,
Prepares each *Christmas*, for the use of all
Who choose to come and of the boon partake: 335
He, noble soul! is ever foremost seen
In acts conducive to the public good;
Nor lives a man, in Britain's wide domain,
More fraught with ardour for his country's weal,
Or warm attachment to his rightful King. 340

Nor shall the rest of Bristol's lib'r'l sons
Escape unfung. Mov'd with *Compassion*, they,
When *Christmas* last revisited our world,
Attended with extremity of *cold*,
Incessant frost, and ceaseless clouds of snow, 345
Large contributions through the city made,
And dealt the balm of comfort to the souls
Of pining thousands, who had long sustain'd

The iron hand of Poverty severe!*

Ye sons of Bristol! much the Muse reflects, 350
With secret pleasure, on your *deeds humane*:
Enroll'd in Heav'n's bright archives they remain:
Nor all the spleen a L——L can discharge
Your *fame* shall fully, or your *worth* degrade.

* This instance of the generosity of the people of Bristol, toward the indigent, is an additional proof of the *injustice* the author of "Bristol, a Satire," is guilty of, in charging them with want of *humanity*.



CHRISTMAS

The non-pain of Loveliness! *

Ye sons of Thessaly! March ye Muse! Ye leggy
330

Wife! Select, before me, an stout youth, Yvaine;

Foolish in Hesitation, trifling in thy leisure;

Note all the books, and can thyself ride;

You're mine till you're out of degree.



* This finishing of the comedy of the books of Buffon, long since past,
is in the original book of the author, who writes to "Buffon",
"I have done, as you will see, with my best work to present you,

